



Rocky Mountain National Park

» Alternative Multiuse Trail Options



The National Park Service (NPS) is preparing a Multiuse Trail Plan/Environmental Assessment (plan/EA) to evaluate the potential for developing a multiuse trail system within the developed eastern portion of Rocky Mountain National Park (the park). The alternatives analysis studies two preliminary options for a trail system, which would extend from the Fall River Entrance to Sprague Lake, with connections to the Beaver Meadows Visitor Center and numerous hiker shuttle stops.

Background

Rocky Mountain National Park serves as a destination for local residents as well as visitors from afar, and greatly contributes to the quality of life in the Front Range of Colorado. Self-propelled recreational activities, such as hiking, jogging, bicycling, and other trail-based activities, are increasingly popular in the park, and a multiuse trail would provide an alternative means to visit the park other than relying on the private automobile.

In 2009, the park completed a Multiuse Trail Feasibility Study. The feasibility study identified approximately 15.5 miles of potential multiuse trails that generally follow the alignment of existing roads from the Fall River Visitor Center, to Deer Ridge Junction, to the Beaver Meadows Visitor Center, Moraine Park, and Sprague Lake. This plan/EA will build on that initial study

to examine in further detail the potential alignment, alternative routing, and their impacts on the environment. The planning process also provides multiple opportunities for public input.

Draft Multiuse Trail Alignment

Based on comments from public scoping in the spring of 2013, along with previous planning studies and additional analysis of the topography and natural and cultural resources, two preliminary options for the multiuse trail alignment have been identified within the developed eastern portion of the park.

This newsletter focuses on the preliminary multiuse trail alignments, which constitute the “action” alternatives. In addition, a “no action” alternative will be included in the plan/EA, which will be made available for public review.

PURPOSE OF THE PLAN

The purpose of this plan/EA is to evaluate the potential for developing a multiuse trail system to connect with recreational areas and other local trail systems in the Estes Valley, to reduce traffic congestion, and to expand multimodal options along the developed corridor of roads on the east side of the park. The proposed trail would be located outside of designated wilderness.

The objectives include connecting to and expanding recreational opportunities in the area, reducing vehicular congestion by linking to the park’s shuttle system, and providing an alternative means of self-propelled access. The goal is to provide for a safe trail system that better manages demand and congestion and creates new visitor experiences within the park.

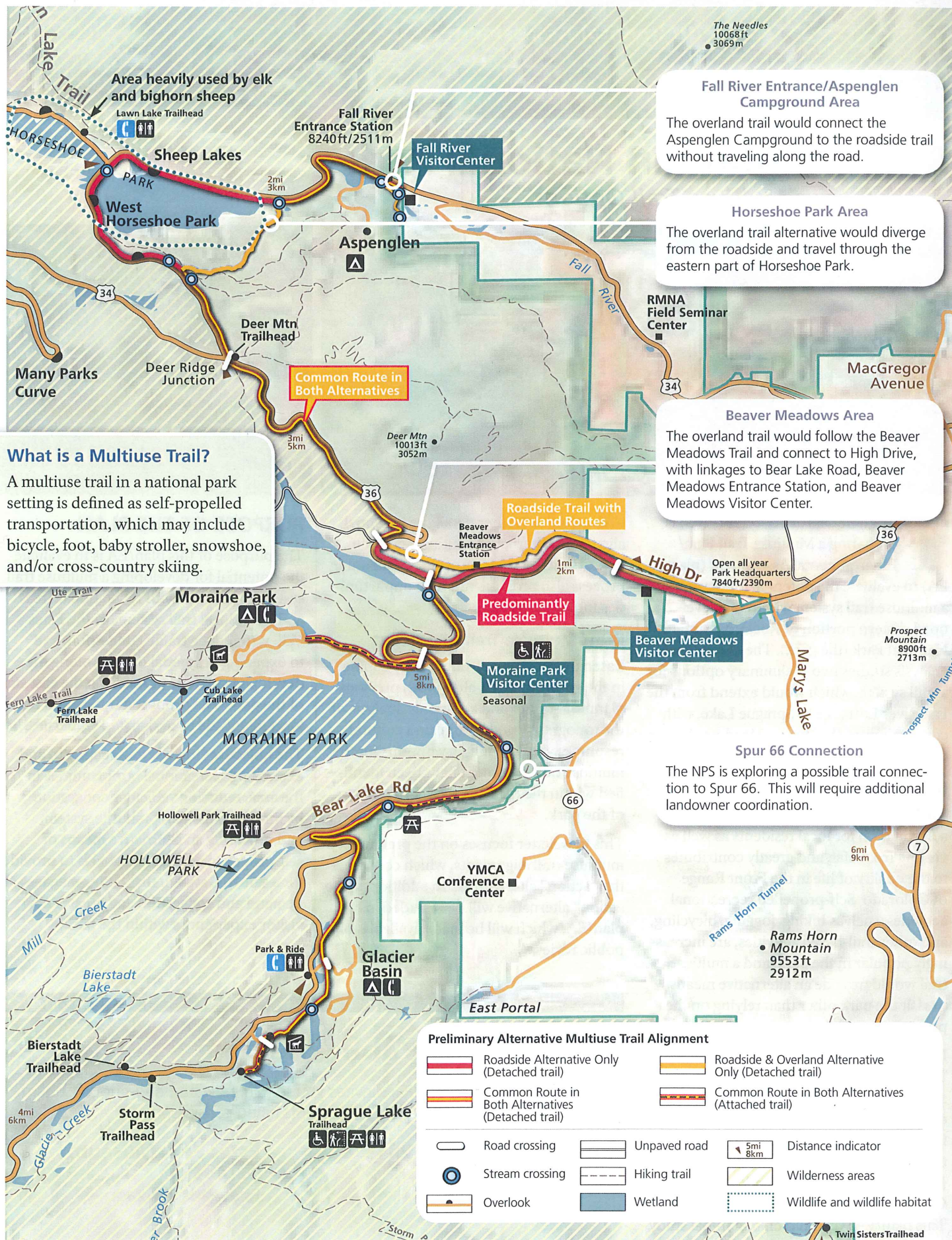
Public Meeting

Rocky Mountain National Park invites you to join park staff and our consultant in reviewing the alternative trail alignments being considered.

Tuesday, August 6, 2013
4:45pm to 6:15pm



Estes Park Museum
200 4th Street
Estes Park, Colorado



PRELIMINARY ALTERNATIVES

Two preliminary action alternatives have been identified based on the purpose, needs, and objectives of this project, along with input from public scoping and on-site analysis. Illustrated in the figure on the left, the “Roadside Trail” alternative, as envisioned in the 2009 feasibility study, generally follows the alignment of US 34 and US 36 around Aspenglen and Horseshoe Park, and continues south to Moraine Park and Sprague Lake along Bear Lake Road, with a connection to the Beaver Meadows Visitor Center and a possible connection to Spur 66. Although they are synonymous in many locations, the “Roadside & Overland” alternative alignment is a separate action alternative because the suggested overland routes have been identified since the feasibility study and initial public scoping.

DEFINITIONS

Attached Trails

Attached trails run alongside an existing road, offset by three to 10 feet with a green buffer or a form of traffic barrier separating the trail from the edge of pavement.

Detached Trails

Detached trails may or may not run parallel to an existing road. They are offset from the edge of pavement by more than 10 feet and may be further separated by grade changes.

Overland Trail Routes

Overland trail routes diverge from the roadside trails, allowing users to access areas away from vehicle traveled routes and in some cases provide connections to regional multiuse trail systems.

Road Crossings

For safety, appropriate signage and pavement markings would be necessary to alert drivers at locations where the trail crosses from one side of a road to another.

Stream Crossings

In areas where the multiuse trail is attached to an adjacent roadway, improvements to existing bridges would be necessary to accommodate the multiuse trail at stream or river crossings. New separate trail bridges would need to be installed where the detached trail or overland trail crosses over streams.

RESOURCES OF CONCERN

The locations of park resources were considered during development of the alternatives. The resources described below are only a few of the many that were considered, and the plan/EA will fully discuss impacts on the natural, cultural, and human resources of the park and the local community.

Wildlife and Wildlife Habitat

The addition of a new trail in some areas may cause a change in habitat use patterns by large ungulates such as bighorn sheep and elk, especially in the vicinity of Sheep Lakes at Horseshoe Park.

Wetlands

The NPS avoids impacting wetlands to the extent possible; however, some stream crossings are unavoidable and may impact wetlands, especially in flat areas such as where Fall River travels through the alluvial fan at Horseshoe Park.

Wilderness

The trail would intentionally avoid the park’s designated wilderness areas.

WHAT ARE IMPACT TOPICS?

Impact topics are resources of concern within the project area that could be affected, either beneficially or adversely, by the range of alternatives. They are identified based on the issues raised during scoping, site conditions, staff knowledge of the park’s resources, and relevant law and policy.

Impact topics identified so far as potentially affected by the preliminary multiuse trail include soils, topography, and geology; vegetation; wildlife and wildlife habitat; wetlands; floodplains; visitor use and experience; socioeconomic resources and gateway communities; and operations and infrastructure. Other resources such as wilderness areas constrain where the trail can be proposed but would not be impacted by the preliminary trail. These topics will be thoroughly evaluated in the plan/EA.



WHAT ARE THE COMPONENTS OF THE MULTIUSE TRAIL?

Both multiuse trail alternatives contain components and strategies that help inform trail users and provide a safe, accessible, and enjoyable experience along the trail. The elements listed below are considerations and amenities that are important to include in the design of the trail and its related facilities.



Safety

Safety of the various trail users groups and vehicular traffic was considered in the development of the preliminary alternative alignments. Appropriate widths, path slopes, and traffic calming strategies, such as radar speed boards, would be considered at road crossings where vehicle speed is an issue.



Visitor Facilities

Comfort stations and facilities are available adjacent to the preliminary multiuse trail, located at visitor centers, campgrounds, and Sprague Lake. Portions of the multiuse trail would accommodate disabled individuals. However, due to the steep terrain in the park, some portions of the multiuse trail may not readily accommodate disabled visitors.



Visitor Information and Wayfinding

Directional and informational signs along the multiuse trail are important to help regulate trail use and guide visitors to key destinations and interpretive areas, as well as to trail heads and visitor facilities. This may include map kiosks, interpretive signs, and trail use rules.



Parking, Shuttle Stops, and Bike Racks

To enhance accessibility, connections to existing parking areas and shuttle stops are an important element of the multiuse trail. In addition, bike racks would be installed at all visitor facilities to ensure that cyclists have a safe place to lock up their bikes.

Planning Process Timeline



GET INVOLVED!

Log online or send us a letter to comment on the preliminary alternative and options for a multiuse trail within the developed eastern portion of Rocky Mountain National Park.



ONLINE AT PEPC

<http://parkplanning.nps.gov/romo>

Select "Multi-Use Trail EA" and then "Open For Comment" to access the public comment form.



BY MAIL

Rocky Mountain National Park
Attn: Multiuse Trail EA
1000 US Highway 36
Estes Park, CO 80517-8397

WHAT'S NEXT?

After receiving public comments, the NPS will consider revisions to the alternatives based on your ideas and suggestions. The impact of the preliminary trail alignments on the natural, cultural, and human environment will be carefully analyzed in the plan/EA.

Please send any comments by Friday, August 23, 2013